Christine Blondel, **Ampère et la Création de l'électrodynámique** (1820–1827). Paris: Bibliotheque Nationale, 1982. Pp. 202. ISBN 2-7177-1643-2. 175 F (paper).

The subject matter of this book is a series of experimental and theoretical researches into electromagnetism, made by Ampère between 1820 and 1824, that is by any standards remarkable. That this work has only recently come to be analysed in detail (other scholars are also working in the same field) is due less to Ampère's achievement, which has long been recognised, than to his ability to completely baffle historians coming to his work with traditional notions of how science is done. Even Blondel, while giving due credit to Ampère's deep and pervasive concern with matters of psychology and epistemology, does not perhaps bring out the full sophistication of his method. But by simply attending to the details of his research (pieced together from a mass of published and unpublished fragments) and writing, including not only his solo studies but also his collaboration with Fresnel, Arago, de la Rive and others, and by focussing in particular on the way theory, experiment and hypothesis were blended in his research, she has succeeded in going way beyond any of her predecessors. Treating of specifics, the book is suggestive of generalities; treating of physics it is suggestive of psychology. Treating of Ampère it brings to the fore in the history of science a man who should have been there all along. Much still remains to be done, and especially argued about, but Blondel's book provides an excellent basis for such argument and, for the meantime at least, the best portrait of Ampère we have.

London Business School JOHN HENDRY